



City Enrichment Fund (CEF) 2026

Arts Program Area Arts Operating Handbook



City Enrichment Fund

Arts Program Area

Objective

To provide opportunities for all the people of Hamilton to enjoy and actively participate in the arts while:

- Enhancing social, economic, and cultural prosperity
- Building strength in the arts sector

All programs funded through the Arts Program will support Hamilton's community vision, Our Future Hamilton. [Learn more about Our Future Hamilton here.](#)

How to apply for a grant

- ☐ Read the **City Enrichment Fund Guidelines** and the **Arts Handbook** for details about the program, stream objectives, eligibility, and criteria.
- ☐ Refer to the **Application Details** section to complete the application.
- ☐ You will be required to complete all sections of the application online.
- ☐ Upload all documents (use the checklist to confirm that you have submitted all attachments).

ARTS OPERATING

Arts Program Area – Arts Operating Handbook

Objective

To provide not-for-profit arts organizations with a stable funding base to enable them to further their mission.

Description

This funding stream provides annual and multi-year grants* to support the operation (administration and programming) of established professional, semi-professional, and emerging organizations in all artistic disciplines.

* Multi-Year Funding

- There is no intake for MYF applications during this application cycle.
- The City Enrichment Fund is piloting a 3-year multi-year funding program which offered returning A rated CEF applicants with an option to receive a 3-year funding commitment.
- The 3-year pilot period began with the 2025 CEF cycle, with qualifying MYF grantees receiving a commitment of funding for years 2 and 3, 2026 and 2027 respectively.
- If the pilot is converted to a permanent program the next intake for MYF funding will be fall 2027 for programs or projects beginning in 2028.

Funding Categories

Established Professional Organization

Definition	A professional arts organization is led by arts professionals who observe best practices and pursue standards of excellence within their discipline. Professional organizations are those who work with other arts professionals whom they pay, at minimum standard fees, for the artistic work.
Status	Incorporated for five years or more
Maximum Funding	Up to 30% of operating expenses. • Audited Financial Statements are required for grant requests greater than or equal to \$30,000. • Total funding received from all sources in the City of Hamilton cannot exceed 30% of the program budget.
Assessment Weighting	34% Organizational Capacity 36% Program Merit 30% Community Impact

Established Semi-Professional Organization

Definition	A semi-professional arts organization is generally led by arts professionals who pursue standards of excellence within their discipline and includes participants who are not generally paid for the artistic work they do within the organization.
Status	Incorporated for five years or more
Maximum Funding	Up to 30% of operating expenses. • Audited Financial Statements are required for grant requests greater than or equal to \$30,000. • Total funding received from all sources in the City of Hamilton cannot exceed 30% of the program budget
Assessment Weighting	34% Organizational Capacity 36% Program Merit 30% Community Impact

Emerging Organization (Professional or Semi-Professional)

Definition	An emerging arts organization is a not-for-profit professional or semi- professional arts organization which has been incorporated for between one and four years and has a history of sustained activity on a seasonal or year-round basis.
Status	Incorporated for less than five years
Maximum Funding	Emerging Professional: up to a maximum of \$30,000 per year Emerging Semi-Professional: up to a maximum of \$10,000 per year. • Audited Financial Statements are required for grant requests greater than or equal to \$30,000. • Total funding received from all sources in the City of Hamilton cannot exceed 30% of the program budget.
Assessment Weighting	35% Organizational Capacity 50% Program Merit 15% Community Impact

Arts Operating Guidelines

These guidelines are in addition to the general CEF guidelines and eligibility criteria.

Eligibility	• Arts Operating applicants must be incorporated not-for-profit organizations • Applicants must be operating year-round and be offering programs and services that are open to the public and publicized city-wide • The organization's head office must be located within Hamilton and the majority of their activities must occur within the city Applicants should apply based on the number of years that the organization has been incorporated. Please note the funding maximums within each Funding Category. Arts organizations that receive a City Enrichment Fund Arts Operating Grant may also apply for an Arts Festival grant on a one-year basis for a new festival initiative in the Emerging Arts Festival category.
Ineligible Organizations	In addition to the general CEF ineligible criteria: • Organizations that are not incorporated • Business Improvement Associations • Applicants to Communities, Culture & Heritage Program Area
Eligible Expenses	All ongoing artistic and administrative expenses are eligible. Not-for-profit arts organizations that operate a major stream of activity that is not eligible under the Arts Program (e.g. academic school), must exclude that activity in the application narrative and in the provided Financial Information.
Ineligible Expenses	In addition to the general CEF ineligible expenses: • Costs associated with capital projects (e.g. equipment, renovations, purchase of buildings). • Awards, bursaries grants, prizes, or scholarships

Assessment Criteria	Each Funding Category will be assessed separately using the following assessment criteria and weighting: 34% Organizational Capacity as demonstrated by: • Ability of the applicant to further their mission • Responsible management • Responsible oversight and active engagement of the Board • Financial stability and viability • Effective planning and evaluation 36% Program Merit as demonstrated by: • Clear programming vision that reflects the organization's mandate and/or mission • Successful track record of achievement: quality and quantity of programming • Leadership contribution to the development of the arts sector • The applicant's activities bring provincial, national, or international recognition to Hamilton • Improving the quality of life for the residents of Hamilton • Audience development initiatives aimed at reaching Hamilton's broad, diverse community 30% Community Impact as demonstrated by: • Employment and training opportunities for Hamilton artists, cultural workers, and contractors • Direct and indirect spending in Hamilton • Strong and successful relationships and partnerships with the business and the not-for-profit community • The applicant's audience and reach into Hamilton's broad diverse community • Offering meaningful opportunities for volunteers
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Arts Operating Application

Applicants are to apply through the
[City Enrichment Fund - Survey Monkey Apply Online Platform](#)

- Create an account for organization.
- Applicants are responsible for providing all the information and attachments requested.
- Make updates to the saved organization information, contacts etc. before beginning a new application.
- Save information as you move between pages.
- The City Enrichment Fund will make decisions regarding your eligibility based on the information provided in your application.

APPLICATION

Application Information Form

Applicant Contact Information

Additional Contact persons for your organization (The CEF recommends including a secondary contact for your organization)

Organization Full Name

Is your organization legal name different than the above organization full name?
Yes / No

Organization Legal Name

Should your application be successful, under what name are you able to deposit funds? Please note that legal names of organizations will be published.

Organization Establish Date Provide the date that organization was formed / incorporated.

Organization Address

Legal Status or Organization (select all that apply)

- Not-for-profit
- Registered Charity
- Individual artist or collective – *ineligible to apply to Arts Operating stream*
- Unincorporated group with not-for-profit goals and governance structure – *ineligible to apply to Arts Operating stream*

Not-For Profit Registration Number and/or Registered Charitable Number

Is your organization's head office located in the City of Hamilton? Yes/No

Will the program for which you are applying take place within the city of Hamilton?

Yes / No

Program Information Form

Program Area: Arts

Is this application for a returning program? Yes/No

To be considered returning, a program or service must be delivered by the same organization and have received funding through the same CEF program area and stream.

Arts Stream: Operating

Category: Established Professional, Established Semi-Professional, or Emerging

Program Name: Annual Operations

Provide a brief summary of your program – Please note that this description will be included in a publicly accessible City of Hamilton Council report. This description is not scored.

Organization Mission or Mandate (Approx. 200 words)

Provide a brief history of your organization – include important milestones and / or changes to the organization's direction over time. (Approx. 250 words)

Provide a detailed description of your program (Approx. 1000 words)

- The programming direction
- A summary of artistic activities describing the quality, diversity, and innovativeness
- Programming schedule
- A description of how artists are selected, and fees paid
- Community outreach efforts and additional programming activities such as artist talks, education programming, lectures, etc.
- *(Established Organizations only)* How the programming contributes to the arts sector locally, provincially, or nationally

Note: Established and Semi-Professional Established Organizations may submit additional programming information, text format and / or statistics, under Program Attachments. (2 page maximum)

Specify how funding from the City Enrichment Fund will be used. (Approx. 500 words)

Your description should relate to the details provided in your programming description and to your proposed budget.

Describe how this program can be scaled should the total funding request not be received. (Approx. 500 words)

The City Enrichment Fund does not guarantee that successful applicants will receive their full grant request. Applicants are asked to confirm how they will adapt to funding amounts below their request level.

How will your program increase community participation? (Approx. 500 words)

- Describe your audience/participants
- Volunteer program(s). How do you recruit volunteers?
- Artistic contributions/cultural impact

What are the measurable outcomes of your program?

Describe the outcome of your program to your organization and / or to the community as a direct result to your activities. Ensure that each outcome is measurable. Multiple measures for a single outcome are acceptable. If your application is successful and you receive funding, you will be required to report back on the outcomes provided.

Provide three measurable outcomes.

The outcomes listed should reflect the organizational and / or programming goals for the request year in a manner that can be measured and evaluated.

- What is your desired outcome / goal?
- How will you measure your success?
- What is the impact or affect for the organization?

Examples:

Outcome	Measure(s)	Impact or Results Expected
Increased social media presence.	• 100% increase in Facebook 'likes' (total of 400 likes). • 5 Facebook 'shares' per event / program.	An increase in social media activity will expand our audience reach and direct communication.
Increase annual membership by 5%	• 100% renewal rate for 2026 membership (300 total) • Enroll 15 new members (5%)	Our membership has remained at approx. 300 for the past 2 years. With the increased social media presence and focus on membership benefits we hope to attract new members.
Maintain 2025 sponsorship levels.	• After losing 2 significant sponsors in 2020, the organization is focusing on maintaining our 9 longtime sponsors.	By evaluating the mutual benefits of each sponsor relationship, the organization hopes to enhance the value to current and future sponsors.

Describe both formal and informal program partnerships. How do these relationships enhance your program activities? (Approx. 300 words)

- Community outreach partners and relationships

- Partnerships with other not-for-profits and the partnerships
- Other organization partners
- For-profit partnerships and relationships

List the team members that will ensure your program is well managed and achieves your desired goals. Include a brief explanation of how their expertise / specialization will make your program a success. (Approx. 300 words)

This may include members from your staff, Board of Directors, and / or committee members. Consider how these team members reflect the community you serve.

How does this program enrich the city? (Approx. 300 words)

- What are the benefits and contributions to the community?
- How does your organization develop its audience and reach Hamilton's broad diverse community?

Community Vision

Review the City of Hamilton's Community Vision that aligns with this program.

Which of our community priorities align with this program? (select up to three)

- ☐ Community Engagement and Participation
- ☐ Economic Prosperity & Growth
- ☐ Healthy and Safe Communities
- ☐ Clean and Green Built
- ☐ Environment and Infrastructure
- ☐ Culture and Diversity

Describe how your program is aligned with the community priorities chosen. (Approx. 200 words)

Please explain how the event / activity supports between one to three community priorities.

Program/Stream Specific Questions

Describe your organizational plans for the funding year. (Approx. 300 words)

- Your significant organizational plans for the request year and how they were shaped by the successes and challenges of last year?
- Discuss your organizational structure and any changes to staff or significant volunteer roles.

Describe the economic impact of your activities on the City of Hamilton? Provide an economic impact statement. Your response may include qualitative and or quantitative information. (Approx. 400 words)

Budget

Additional Budget Template Information

In addition to financial statements, every City Enrichment Fund application requires a completed budget that represents the entire program including all revenues, expenses, and in-kind amounts. Reference the guidelines and handbook to ensure that all expenses are eligible. A good budget is realistic, thorough, detailed, and is reflected in the application.

1. Please note your CEF Request for the 2026 year in the budget form under Request Program Year Amount (\$).
2. Grant Requests cannot be more than 30% of the Total Eligible Program Budget and must demonstrate additional funding / revenue sources (cash only, excludes in-kind).
3. Please note that all funding sources from the City of Hamilton cannot exceed 30% of the Total Eligible Program Budget.
4. It is recommended that submitted budgets are balanced. Provide comments for programs that present a budget deficit or surplus under Budget Form Notes.
5. Please note that this budget is used by all CEF program areas. Use the most appropriate line items provided in addition to the blank spaces listed as 'other.'

Examples:

Revenues:

Item	Current Program Year Amount (\$)	Previous Program Year Actuals (\$)	Name of Funding Program(s) / Brief Explanation of confirmed amounts, rentals etc.
CEF Request			City Enrichment Fund: Amount requested
Provincial / Federal Government			
Membership Fees			
Admission Fees			

Column 1: Item

List of budget line items

Column 2: Request Program Year Amount (\$)

Provide the operating budget for the request year (2026)

Column 3: Previous Program Year Actuals (\$)

Provide the operating budget from the previous year (2025, or the last year of operation)

Column 4: Name of Funding Program(s) / Brief Explanation of confirmed amounts, rentals etc.

Provide point form, brief notes to support proposed budget of line items (point form).
Some examples include:

- Confirm government funding, sponsorship etc., with *Pending or Confirmed*
- Provide a breakdown of a line item i.e. *Total vendor fees, 15 vendors x \$250.*
- Provide notes for significant variances between the previous and request year i.e. *Projecting a 15% fundraising increase with launch of fundraising initiative and team members. OR \$10 K decrease as 2025 was final year of OAC 'XXXXXX' project grant*

Expenses:

Item	Current Program Year Amount (\$)	Previous Program Year Actuals (\$)	Brief Explanation of Expense Line Item (Budgeted vs Actuals)
Venue Rental			
Materials			
Other			

Column 1: Item

List of budget line items

Column 2: Current Program Year Amount (\$)

Provide the budgeted operating expenses for the request year (2026)

Column 3: Previous Program Year Actuals (\$)

Provide the budgeted operating expenses from the previous year (2025 or the last year in operation)

Column 4: Brief Explanation of Expense Line (Budgeted vs Actuals)

Provide point form, brief notes to support proposed budget of line items (point form). Some examples include:

- Provide information on new expense items i.e. *New project grant for 2026, includes set up (\$XXX) and artist fees (\$XXX).*
- Provide notes for significant variances between the previous and request year i.e. *Increase of artist fees with launch of new stage.*

In-Kind Expenses:

Item	Current Program Year Budget Amount (\$)	Previous Program Year Actuals (\$)	Brief Explanation of Expense Line Item (Budgeted vs Actuals
Estimated Volunteer Expenses			
In-Kind Rent Expenses			

In-Kind expenses will not be included in the overall eligible budget but add to the overall understanding of the program.

- Provide the estimated volunteer hours and value of other in-kind contributions.
- For Volunteer Expenses, calculate at \$21/Volunteer hour contributed.

Budget Notes:

If needed, please provide brief, point form notes to support the proposed budget.

- Significant variances between the previous year and request year
- If projecting or carrying a surplus or deficit, please include a surplus justification or deficit reduction plan

Attachments

Organization Attachments:

- Board of Directors list **(mandatory)**. Include role titles, length on BOD.
- Staff list **(mandatory)**. Include job titles and whether full or part-time for both administrative and artistic staff.
- Financial Statements **(mandatory)**. If audited financial statements are not available, then unaudited statements are required. Please note, for grant requests greater than or equal to \$30,000 audited financial statements are mandatory.

Program Attachments:

- Program Marketing Material (**mandatory**). Poster, flyer, pamphlet.
- Program Specific Material
Optional up to 4 program materials, including;
 - Most recent annual report
 - Additional marketing material
 - Performance programs
 - Images
 - Programming statistics and data

IDEA Form

Please note: this task is not scored.

A form collecting information about the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility) groups supported through City Enrichment Funds. Applicants are asked to specify the target population(s) of their programs, and equity designated groups represented within their organization's governance structure.

Applications are not evaluated based on this form, which serves only for data collection.

Declaration Form

Declaration, terms of use, applicant signature(s).

Communications (confirm correct email)

Outstanding CEF Final Reports: Yes / No

Two signatures are required – Recommended 1 Board Member and 1 Staff member.

Submitting Your Application

After each task is finished, please press the '**Mark as Complete**' button on the lower right of the task window. Once all tasks are marked complete, and the application is ready to be submitted, please review the application for completeness by selecting '**Review**' (bottom right).

Applicants will be prompted to review each page. Any incomplete question / field will be clearly marked.

After you Apply

- The application owner will receive confirmation from the portal that the application has been submitted.
- If needed, CEF staff will contact the main applicant by email or phone to confirm the details in the application and ensure the application is complete.
- If the application receives a passing score (above 60%), the application score and recommended level of funding will be presented to the City of Hamilton Grants Sub-Committee for review and approval in spring 2026.
- Funding notifications will be delivered by email. The email will include instructions to receive your funding and a timeline of when funds will be released.
- CEF funding must be used in the same year that it is awarded.
- Grantees must acknowledge the support provided by the City of Hamilton through the funds received by the City Enrichment Fund in program materials and promotion.
- Grantees must complete a Final Report and submit it to CEF staff by February of the following year. A template will be provided by CEF staff after confirmation of funding is received, by Fall 2026. In the Final Report, grantees are required provide the following information:
 - The anticipated vs. actual program budget
 - Examples of any marketing materials, supporting documents, photos, etc. that help tell the story of the initiative and its impact.
 - The measurable outcomes and measures included in within the application. Grantees must report on how your initiative achieved this goal by describing the direct or indirect impact of the program or project on the organization or the community.
 - Describe any unanticipated changes made to the delivery or implementation of the program.
 - Describe learnings from this initiative and provide recommendations to improve this initiative if the organization were to initiate it again, or if the organization was providing advice others considering a similar initiative.

Organizations that do not provide complete Final Report(s) for each program that receives CEF funding will not be eligible to apply for future CEF grants.